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## IS AMERICA IN DANGER?

The words that figure in the unending Washington debate are "missile gap" and "deterrent." Every day finds the babble rising to a new crescendo. The director of the central intelligence agency, Allen W. Dulles, testifies repeatedly about American strength compared to soviet strength, and nobody, except maybe Sen. Symington, seems sure what to conclude. Symington says we're on the short end of a one-to-three ratio in intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The \$60,000 a year vice president of Convair, Thomas G. Lanphier Jr., resigns so that he can be free to continue his criticism of the missile program. He used to be an assistant to Symington when the latter was secretary of the air force, but is a Republican. His firm manufactured the Atlas, the principal operational ICBM. So what does this protest signify?

Mr. Eisenhower has replied to these attacks. He has said, "Our defense is not only strong, it is awesome." He has assured the nation that we possess "an indestructible force of incalculable power." He has stated that, with missile expenditures at the rate of 6.7 billion dollars a year, we are close to the point where money itself will not bring greater speed or quicker development.

"I am always a little bit amazed about this business of catching up [with the Russians]", the President has said. "What you want is enough, a thing that is adequate. A deterrent has no added power, once it has become completely adequate for compelling the respect of any potential opponent, and therefore making him act prudently."

What is the civilian to think of all this, shrouded as the facts—or guesses—are in secrecy, and subject to such conflicting interpretation?

Let us begin by noting that this is the year of a Presidential election; so the debate is, in part, political. The army, navy, and air force, as usual, are fighting for ascendancy in the military structure. Finally, among competing industrialists, there is a contest for orders and profits.

All of these things confuse the issue. The quarrel concerns not only present power on our side and on Russia's side, but also the power relationship two years, three years, or five years from now. There is question not only of the capacity of the prospective opponent to produce weapons of high destruction, but of his intentions. Would he dare strike if he fancied he had superiority at any given moment?

Here, as you see, the debate necessarily becomes fogged by the element of conjecture. And here is where the estimates of America's deterrent power weigh most heavily.

We can assume that Communists are capable of any treachery. We can assume, also, that they would have the advantage of whatever surprise there would be in striking first, for American sentiment has never supported the doctrine of preventive war.

The question, then, divides into two parts. First, are communist world designs so overriding that the leaders of the Soviet Union would run any risk, placing their empire in hazard, on the chance of knocking out the only nation which can block their way to world dominion? Second, what are the limits of destruction or annihilation which would be "acceptable" to them?

First, the element of risk: Nothing is certain in war, or in human existence. Missiles are not so reliable that a good many of them will not prove to be duds. And, if the first salvo did not find the vital centers of American retaliatory power, scattered about the world in more than 100 bases, hidden in the seas, or in the random sanctuary of the air, the reply would be swift.

Whether the American reply would be final cannot be stated with certainty. The United States may, at the moment and in the years immediately ahead, be behind in intercontinental missiles, but its power is not confined to these instruments. It has developed a mixed or multiple deterrent force: long range aircraft; medium range aircraft operating from overseas bases; aircraft operating from carriers; intermediate range missiles based abroad; intercontinental missiles based in the United States, and missiles launched from submarines.

According to Gen. Twining, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, this aggregate power is so immense that it would preclude "a rational decision to attack."

There is a further consideration. The soviet procedure is to play the theme of "peace" and seek to win converts on the basis that communism provides the simultaneous means to material progress and brotherhood. These pretenses would be abandoned once Russia set the world on fire. By that act, Russia would confess the goal of world domination thru force.

Inasmuch as terrific if not universal destruction would be visited on Russia itself, with the soviet leadership as susceptible of extermination as the meanest peasant, who, among the Communists, would pick up the pieces even if the United States, or much of it, were obliterated? Who would stand to profit? Would the survivors in such a world be Communists, or would they abhor what communism had brought upon the world?

In the world of balanced terror that exists, these actual and psychological considerations are far more important than a numerical count of intercontinental missiles. So the debate is, in this sense, largely irrelevant.

In a struggle for survival against barbarians, no holds will be barred. It is now a decade since Adm. Ellis Zacharias stated that nuclear weapons were but fourth among the instruments of destruction.

Those which he assigned precedence were bacteriological weapons, which spread disease; biological weapons, which change the chemistry of the body without producing disease, but are just as lethal when they take the form of radioactive dust, gas, or other things; and climatological weapons, which wipe out vegetation and meat animals.

Any enemy must contemplate the effects of such agencies if he meditates attack. He must calculate the probable degree of success in delivery not only of missiles with nuclear warheads but of all the possible destructive agents which, by polite deference to the sensibilities of the frail race of humans, are not publicly discussed. And the conclusion would seem to be that he would be insane to invite all this upon the world unless he had a death wish of his own.